

Poverty Simulation

Poverty... a word that is frequently used in some's vocabulary, whereas rarely used in others. Growing up, I was lucky enough to be in the group of people who rarely used that word. I never had to worry about the amount of money my parents were making and if that was sufficient to put food on the table that night, if I had enough money for the school trip that week, or the roof over my head. However, the struggles these children face, opened my eyes to a reality far too common in today's society.

As I dug deeper into this assignment, I began to wonder how many times I have come into contact with a child that was living in poverty and simply did not know. I then began to reflect how many times I have encountered patients of all types in the hospital and how many of them were thankful for their stay to have a warm bed and hot food that night. I simply do not think that as a nurse, you can live in a world like today's and not be impacted by this issue.

While watching the "Poor Kids" video, I noticed that many were used to the new norms of going to the food bank to get food rather than the grocery store. More often than not, the cheaper food isn't necessarily the healthiest. This results in poor nutrition for these families and negative affects on their development. I think it is important for nurses to recognize the signs of malnourishment and provide resources for these families, so each child has an equal opportunity to thrive and grow at a developmentally appropriate level.

When I put myself in these parent's shoes while doing the simulation exercise, I noticed that the decisions that must be made are not to be taken lightly. The decision to spend money on rent or on food is one that is made on a day-to-day basis. Something that I hadn't realized before this activity is how difficult it is to raise a family on a low income.

After watching the "Hard Times Generation: Families living in cars" video, I was shocked by the maturity of many of these children. I noticed that a child as young as eight years old was working while not at school to avoid living in the family's car. It is heart-breaking to hear the responses of the parents of these children. As expected, many feel as if they have failed as a parent. One of the parents explained that his purpose as a dad is to provide for his family and he is not able to even do that. Hearing these responses has already greatly influenced the way that I look at the parents of the children coming into the hospital. Many of them are trying their best to be the best version of themselves for their kids, I can imagine it is exhausting. As nurses, we need to give these parents grace and try to care for not only the well-being of their child but for their well-being as well.

I think that going forward, this will greatly impact my nursing practice. Whether I will be working with children or adults, I have already gained so much more knowledge and a new perspective. In the future, I think that as a patient advocate it would be my job to work as hard as I can to give these families new opportunities. I would consult with Social Services to see if these children are eligible for scholarships, food stamps, or donated clothes. Lastly, I would work hard to provide adequate patient teaching as far as support groups, churches, or families in surrounding communities willing to help.

I truly enjoyed how eye-opening this experience was, I hope that I can be the person to help change the lives of the families dealing with poverty one day. When I think back about my life, I realize how blessed I am that I was given the opportunities to thrive and be successful unlike many of the other children in the U.S.. I simply do not think you can do the activities assigned and not be touched by them.